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There are certain qualities, which the biographer of such men as are here named, ought constantly to have in sight, for by tracing them to their first springs, he may offer an important accession to our stock of knowledge, and give soundness and security to our reasonings on moral subjects. Mr. Roscoe may be—and we doubt not that he is—an accurate observer of ordinary events and actions; but to those higher and more important duties of the biographer he has no claim.

Our Village: Sketches of Rural Character and Scenery. By Mary Russell Mitford. Fourth Series.—London: Whittaker, Treacher and Co.

Miss Mitford has favored us with another volume containing twenty-six of her very pretty little stories, besides a pathetic introductory letter, in which the death of her excellent mother, and the burial of 'Poor pretty May,' her greyhound, are recorded. The three preceding volumes of these 'Village Sketches' are so well known, and so generally admired, that it is only necessary for us to tell our readers that the fourth is written in the same agreeable engaging style as those which have gone before. We can scarcely go astray in selecting an extract where all the stories are so natural and so well told, therefore we shall just take the first.

Paul Holton, a rich young yeoman, had visited the village of Hazelby in search of a farm and a wife, in both of which laudable objects he seemed very likely to succeed, until an unlucky cricket-match, which was lost through his bad play, and Letty Dale, the tanner's pretty daughter, taunted him so for letting the East-Woodhay eleven beat the Hazelby eleven, (for he did not score a single notch in either innings,) that he fairly took the pot and departed in dudgeon. This was somewhat more than poor Letty had bargained for: he'll be sure to call to-morrow morning, thought Letty to herself as she tripped home to the pleasant house by the tan-yard—but we must let Miss Mitford sell the rest of the tale in full for herself:

"The first tidings that Letty heard the next morning were, that Mr. Paul Holton had departed over-night, having authorized his cousin to let his houses, and to decline the large farm, for which he was in treaty; the next intelligence informed her that he was settled in Sussex; and then his relation left Hazelby—and poor Letty heard no more. Poor Letty! Even in a common parting for a common journey, she who stays behind is the object of pity; how much more so when he who goes—goes never to return, and carries with him the fond affection, the treasured hopes, of a young unpractised heart,

'And gentle wishes long subdued—
Subdued and cherish'd long!'

Poor, poor Letty!

"Three years passed away, and brought much of change to our country-maiden and to her fortunes. Her father, the jolly old tanner, a kind, frank, thoughtless man, as the cognomen would almost imply, one who did not think that there was such things as wickedness and ingratitude under the sun, became bound for a friend to a large amount; the friend proved a villain, and the jolly tanner was ruined. He and his daughter now lived in a small cottage near their former house; and at the point of time at which I have chosen to resume my story, the old man was endeavour-

ing to persuade Letty, who had never attended a cricket match since the one which she had so much cause to remember, to accompany him the next day (Whit-Tuesday) to see the Hazelby Eleven again encounter their ancient antagonists, the men of East-Woodhay.

"'Pray come, Letty,' said the fond father; 'I can't go without you; I have no pleasure any where without my Letty; and I want to see this match, for Isaac Hunt can't play on account of the death of his mother, and they tell me that the East-Woodhay men have consented to our taking in another mate who practises the new Sussex bowling—I want to see that new-fangled mode. Do come, Letty!' And, with a smothered sigh at the mention of Sussex, Letty consented.

"Now old John Dale was not quite ingenuous with his pretty daughter. He did not tell her what he very well knew himself, that the bowler in question was no other than their sometime friend, Paul Holton, whom the business of letting his houses, or some other cause, not, perhaps, clearly defined even to himself, had brought to Hazelby on the eve of the match, and whose new method of bowling (in spite of his former mischances) the Hazelby Eleven were willing to try; the more so as they suspected, what, indeed, actually occurred, that the East-Woodhayites, who would have resisted the innovation of the Sussex system of delivering the ball in the hands of any one else, would have no objection to let Paul Holton, whose bad playing was a standing joke amongst them, do his best or his worst in any way.

"Not a word of this did John Dale say to Letty; so that she was quite taken by surprise, when, having placed her father, now very infirm, in a comfortable chair, she sat down by his side on a little hillock of turf, and saw her recreant lover standing amongst a group of cricketers very near, and evidently gazing on her—just as he used to gaze three years before.

"Perhaps Letty had never looked so pretty in her life as at that moment. She was simply drest, as became her fallen fortunes. Her complexion was still coloured, like the apple-blossom, with vivid red and white, but there was more of sensibility, more of the heart in its quivering mutability, its alternation of paleness and blushes; the blue eyes were still as bright, but they were oftener cast down; the smile was still as splendid, but far more rare; the girlish gaiety was gone, but it was replaced by womanly sweetness;—sweetness and modesty formed now the chief expression of that lovely face, lovelier, far lovelier, than ever.—So apparently thought Paul Holton, for he gazed and gazed with his whole soul in his eyes, in complete oblivion of cricket and cricketer, and the whole world. At last he recollected himself, blushed and bowed, and advanced a few steps, as if to address her; but timid and irresolute, he turned away without speaking, joined the party who had now assembled round the wickets, the umpires called "Play!" and the game began.

"East-Woodhay gained the toss and went in, and all eyes were fixed on the Sussex bowler. The ball was placed in his hands; and instantly the wicket was down, and the striker out—no other than Tom Taylor, the boast of his parish, and the best batsman in the county. 'Accident, mere accident!' of course, cried East-Woodhay; but another, and another fol-

lowed: few could stand against the fatal bowling, and none could get notches.—A panic seized the whole side. And then, as losers will, they began to exclaim against the system, called it a toss, a throw, a trick; any thing but bowling, any thing but cricket; railed at it as destroying the grace of the attitude, and the balance of the game; protested against being considered as beaten by such jugglery, and, finally, appealed to the umpires as to the fairness of the play. The umpires, men of conscience, and old cricketers, hummed and hawed, and see-sawed; quoted contending precedents and jostling authorities; looked grave and wise, whilst even their little sticks of office seemed vibrating in puzzled importance. Never were judges more sorely perplexed. At last they did as the sages of the bench often do in such cases—reserved the point of law, and desired them to "play out the play."—Accordingly, the match was resumed; only twenty-seven notches being gained by the East-Woodhayians in their first innings, and they entirely from the balls of the old Hazelby bowler, James White.

"During the quarter of an hour's pause which the laws allow, the victorious man of Sussex went up to John Dale, who had watched him with a strange mixture of feeling, delighted to hear the stumps rattle, and to see opponent after opponent throw down his bat and walk off, and yet much annoyed at the new method by which the object was achieved.—'We should not have called this cricket in my day,' said he, 'and yet it knocks down the wickets gloriously, too.' Letty, on her part, had watched the game with unmingled interest and admiration: 'He knew how much I liked to see a good cricketer,' thought she; yet still, when that identical good cricketer approached, she was seized with such a fit of shyness—call it modesty—that she left her seat and joined a group of young women at some distance.

"Paul looked earnestly after her, but remained standing by her father, inquiring with affectionate interest after his health, and talking over the game and the bowling. At length he said, 'I hope that I have not driven away Miss Letitia.'

"'Call her Letty, Mr. Holton,' interrupted the old man; 'plain Letty. We are poor folks now, and have no right to any other title than our own proper names, old John Dale and his daughter Letty. A good daughter she has been to me,' continued the fond father; 'for when debts and losses took all that we had—for we paid to the uttermost farthing, Mr. Paul Holton, we owe no man a shilling!—when all my earnings and savings were gone, and the house over our head—the house I was born in, the house she was born in—I loved it the better for that!—taken away from us, then she gave up the few hundreds she was entitled to in right of her blessed mother to purchase an annuity for the old man, whose trust in a villain had brought her to want.'

"'God bless her!' interrupted Paul Holton. "Ay, and God will bless her,' returned the old man solemnly—'God will bless the dutiful child, who despoiled herself of all to support her old father.'

"'Blessings on her dear generous heart!' again ejaculated Paul; 'and I was away and knew nothing of this!'

"'I knew nothing of it myself until the deed was completed,' rejoined John Dale.—'She was just of age, and the annuity was

purchased and the money paid before she told me; and a cruel kindness it was to strip herself for my sake; it almost broke my heart when I heard the story. But even that was nothing," continued the good tanner, warming with his subject, "compared with her conduct since. If you could but see how she keeps the house, and how she waits upon me; her handiness, her cheerfulness, and all her pretty ways and contrivances to make me forget old times and old places. Poor thing! she must miss her neat parlour and the flower-garden she was so fond of, as much as I do my tanyard and the great hall; but she never seems to think of them, and never has spoken a hasty word since our misfortunes, for all you know, poor thing! she used to be a little quick-tempered!"

"And I knew nothing of this!" repeated Paul Holton, as two or three of their best wickets being down, the Hazelby players summoned him to go in. "I knew nothing of all this!"

"Again all eyes were fixed on the Sussex cricketer, and at first he seemed likely to verify the predictions and confirm the hopes of the most malicious of his adversaries, by batting as badly as he had bowled well. He had not caught sight of the ball; his hits were weak, his defence insecure, and his mates began to tremble and his opponents to crow. Every hit seemed likely to be the last; he missed a leg ball of Ned Smith's; was all but caught out by Sam Newton; and East-Woodhay triumphed, and Hazelby sat quaking; when a sudden glimpse of Letty, watching him with manifest anxiety, recalled her champion's wandering thoughts. Gathering himself up he stood before the wicket another man; knocked the ball hither and thither, to the turnpike, the coppice, the pond; got three, four, five at a hit; baffled the slow bowler James Smith, and the fast bowler Tom Taylor; got fifty-five notches off his own bat; stood out all the rest of his side; and so handled the adverse party when they went in, that the match was won at a single innings, with six-and-thirty runs to spare.

"Whilst his mates were discussing their victory, Paul Holton again approached the father and daughter, and this time she did not run away: 'Letty, dear Letty,' said he; 'three years ago I lost the cricket-match and you were angry, and I was a fool. But Letty, dear Letty, this match is won; and if you could but know how deeply I have repented, how earnestly I have longed for this day! The world has gone well with me, Letty, for these three long years. I have wanted nothing but the treasure which I myself threw away, and now, if you would but let your father be my father, and my home your home!—if you would but forgive me, Letty!'

"Letty's answer is not upon record: but it is certain that Paul Holton walked home from the cricket-ground that evening with old John Dale hanging on one arm, and John Dale's pretty daughter on the other; and that a month after the bells of Hazelby church were ringing merrily in honour of one of the fairest and luckiest matches that ever cricketer lost and won."

There is a great deal of similar pathos and natural description throughout the volume which we gladly introduce to the favourable regards of our readers.

The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart. 11 vols. 18mo. New Edition.—Edinburgh, Cadell, and Co—London, Simpkin and Marshall.

[SECOND NOTICE.]

As our readers have doubtless observed that we are prodigiously national in all our sayings and doings, we shall venture to adopt a Hibernian *façon de parler* in discussing the merits of the new edition of Sir Walter, and pronounce that the *prose* part of these poetical works will be found by far the most generally interesting, both from its novelty and its nature. The distinguishing features of this edition we disclosed in our last, when introducing to our public the most striking features of Sir Walter's Literary Autobiography. To this we should, perhaps, have prefixed the following paragraph, which relates to a still earlier period of his career:

"During the last ten years of the eighteenth century, the art of poetry was at a remarkably low ebb in Britain. Hayley, to whom fashion had some years before ascribed a higher degree of reputation than posterity has confirmed, had now lost his reputation for talent, though he still lived admired and respected as an amiable and accomplished man. The bard of memory slumbered on his laurels, and he of hope, had scarce begun to attract his share of public attention. Cowper, a poet of deep feeling and bright genius, was dead; and, even while alive, the hypochondria, which was his mental malady, impeded his popularity. Burn's, whose genius our southern neighbours could hardly yet comprehend, had long confined himself to song writing. Names which are now known and distinguished wherever the English language is spoken, were then only beginning to be mentioned; and unless among the small number of persons who habitually devote a part of their leisure to literature, those of Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, were but little known. The realms of Parnassus, like many a kingdom at the period, seemed to lie open to the first bold invader, whether he should be a daring usurper, or could show a legitimate title of sovereignty." The author subjoins a detail of his progress in German literature, and its influence upon his own mind, together with a minute account of his first sins in the ballad-making line. After a humorous account of the difficulties his boyish muse had to encounter from the critical animadversions of an apothecary's wife, and other fatalities, he proceeds in a graver style to account for the composition of the Lay of the last Minstrel, as follows:

"Neither was I ignorant that the practice of ballad-writing was for the present out of fashion, and that any attempts to revive it, or to found a poetical character upon it, would certainly fail of success. The ballad measure itself, which was once listened to as an enchanting melody, had become hackneyed and sickening, from its being the accompaniment of every grinding hand-organ; and besides, a long work in quatrains, whether those of the common ballad, or such as are termed the elegiac, have an effect on the sense like that of the bed of Procrustes on the human body; for, as it must be both awkward and difficult to carry on a long sentence from one stanza to another, it follows that the meaning of each period must be comprehended within four lines, and equally so, that it must be extended so as to fill that space. The alternate dilation and contraction thus rendered necessary, is singularly unfavourable to narrative composition; and the 'Gondibert'

of Sir William D'Avenant, though containing many striking passages, has never become popular, owing chiefly to its being told in this species of elegiac verse.

"In the dilemma occasioned by this objection, the idea occurred to the author of using the measured short line, which forms the structure of so much minstrel poetry, that it may be properly termed the romantic stanza, by way of distinction; and which appears so natural to our language, that the very best of our poets have not been able to protract it into the verse properly called heroic, without the use of epithets which are, to say the least, unnecessary. But, on the other hand, the extreme facility of the short couplet, which seems congenial to our language, and was, doubtless for that reason, so popular with our old minstrels, is, for the same reason, apt to prove a snare to the composer who uses it, by encouraging him in a habit of slovenly composition. The necessity of occasional pauses often forces the young poet to pay more attention to sense, as the boy's kite rises highest when the train is loaded by a due counterpoise. The author was therefore intimidated by what Byron calls the 'fatal facility' of the octo-syllabic verse, which was otherwise better adapted to his purpose of imitating the more ancient poetry.

"I was not less at a loss for a subject which might admit of being treated with the simplicity and wildness of the ancient ballad. But accident dictated both a theme and measure, which decided the subject as well as the structure of the poem.

"The lovely young Countess of Dalkeith, afterwards Harriet, Duchess of Buccleuch, had come to the land of her husband, with the desire of making herself acquainted with its traditions and customs. All who remember this lady will agree, that the intellectual character of her extreme beauty, the amenity and courtesy of her manners, the soundness of her understanding, and her unbounded benevolence, gave more the idea of an angelic visitant than of a being belonging to this nether world; and such a thought was but too consistent with the short space she was permitted to tarry amongst us. Of course, where all made it a pride and pleasure to gratify her wishes, she soon heard enough of Border lore; among others, an aged gentleman of property, near Langholm, communicated to her ladyship the story of Gilpin Horner, a tradition in which the narrator, and many more of that country, were firm believers. The young countess, much delighted with the legend, and the gravity and full confidence with which it was told, enjoined it on me as a task to compose a ballad on the subject. Of course, to hear was to obey; and thus the goblin story, objected to by several critics as an excrescence upon the poem, was, in fact, the occasion of its being written.

"A chance similar to that which dictated the subject, gave me also the hint of a new mode of treating it. We had at that time the lease of a pleasant cottage, near Lasswade, on the romantic banks of the Esk, to which we escaped when the vacations of the court permitted so much leisure. Here I had the pleasure to receive a visit from Mr. Stoddart, (now Sir John Stoddart, judge-advocate at Malta,) who was at that time collecting the particulars which he afterwards embodied in his *Remarks on Local Scenery in Scotland*. I was of some use to him in procuring the information he desired, and guiding him to the scenes which he